

International Union of Operating Engineers Local 324  
Testimony before the House Transportation Committee  
HB 4961

My name is Sam Houston.

I am the Regional Director and Transportation and Infrastructure Liaison with IUOE Local 324. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 4961, a plan that will build public-private partnerships to strengthen Michigan's roads, bridges and other infrastructure. IUOE Local 324 supports this bill because it will help create jobs and put Michigan citizens back to work.

It is no secret that Michigan's infrastructure is in desperate need of repair. The state's struggling economy and budget problems have put a squeeze on road repairs, bridge and overpass improvements, and expansions to rail and additional highway lanes.

These infrastructure investments are vital to our future. Just about every major survey done in recent years has told us that good roads, bridges and overall infrastructure are key considerations for businesses when they look to locate in Michigan.

Unless we take action now to strengthen, expand and improve our roads and bridges, businesses will continue to bypass Michigan and invest in states with better infrastructure. House Bill 4961 gives us an innovative method to invest in our infrastructure.

In addition to rolling out the welcome mat for new businesses, improving our roads and bridges will also have the immediate effect of putting people back to work. By creating potentially hundreds of thousands of new jobs, we will instantly pump money into the economy and support local businesses.

As we know all too well, Michigan's roads and bridges are in bad shape.

Every day, families and businesses using our roads must brave crumbled roads and bridges, tank-sized potholes and other dangers. These risks are not acceptable. Our roads and bridges must be fixed to reduce accidents, reduce costs and save lives. Michigan's economy and our families' safety are directly tied to our roads and bridges. Our families deserve safe, strong roads and bridges, not roads and bridges crumbling to dust and held together by Band-aids.

IUOE Local 324 supports HB 4961 because we believe it will provide a unique opportunity for Michigan to partner with private investment to strengthen Michigan's infrastructure needs. Business as usual is not acceptable. To compete in today's economy, we must find innovative ways to squeeze value out of every dollar, and HB 4961 will help us do that.

Private-public partnerships, commonly called P3s, have been successful in other states on a wide variety of projects. IUOE Local 324 believes that with appropriate oversight and the use of effective models, it can prove to be just as successful in Michigan.

The Legislature has frequently reminded Michigan citizens that its Number One job is creating and saving jobs. At IUOE Local 324, job losses and unemployment are things we know all too well. Michigan has the nation's highest unemployment rate. At IUOE Local 324, half of our members are out of work. We see firsthand the devastation of job loss to the family and to the community. Our members work hard and we're proud to build, operate and maintain Michigan's infrastructure. We are ready to get back to work, and we strongly believe that House Bill 4961 can help achieve this important goal.

We urge you to help us seize this important opportunity, and pass HB 4961.

By supporting this bill, you can help jumpstart Michigan's economy and put countless people back to work in jobs ranging from research and planning to design and construction. It will positively impact every community in Michigan and spark new economic activity. IUOE Local 324 has worked closely with MDOT and other organizations in crafting P3 legislation that is balanced, flexible and focused on safety.

We respectfully urge you to support House Bill 4961 and help us put Michigan back to work.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam Houston".

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